

A Geography of Strata — On Failing to see Verticality
(And Most of the Birds Along the Way)
For Archivio Atena

Fabio Barile

Our visual field naturally develops along a horizontal axis: the placement of the eyes on the human face offers us a wide, horizontal view of the world. It is along this line that we are accustomed to reading the landscape, constructing our idea of distance, depth, orientation, and extension.

This work was born precisely from the desire to subvert that point of view. Through the Vertical Atlas workshop, I attempted to explore the landscape according to a vertical logic, observing it not as a continuous surface but as a sequence of overlapping planes that interact with one another: a series of stratifications extending from the underground layers up to the mountain peaks.

To attempt this reading, however, I had to divide verticality into four distinct levels, each corresponding to a specific altitude of operation: 250 m a.s.l., 450 m a.s.l., 625 m a.s.l., and 1100 m a.s.l.

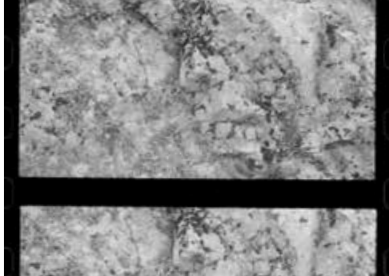
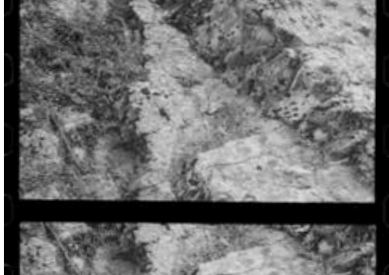
From the outset, this subdivision revealed itself as a necessary yet paradoxical compromise: in order to think vertically, I had to interrupt vertical continuity. I transformed a natural flow into a sequence of artificial thresholds. My attempt to see vertically fractured at the very moment I had to ask myself: how can I visualize verticality?

The second element of failure concerned the presence of birds, natural figures that traverse verticality. I was unable to photograph them, except in rare, blurred, marginal cases. Yet their absence, instead of becoming emptiness, produced an unexpected deviation: I began to know them not through the lens, but through drawing. Sketching those birds I had failed to capture photographically transformed failure into possibility and knowledge.

A Geography of Strata is therefore a work that does not describe verticality as something given, but as something sought and missed, something constructed through effort, through loss, and also through a shift in language, from photography to drawing, from evidence to supposition.

250 m a.s.l.











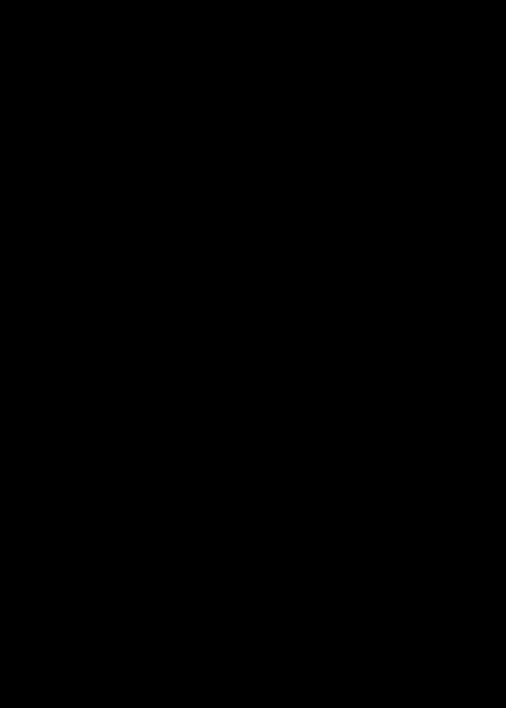
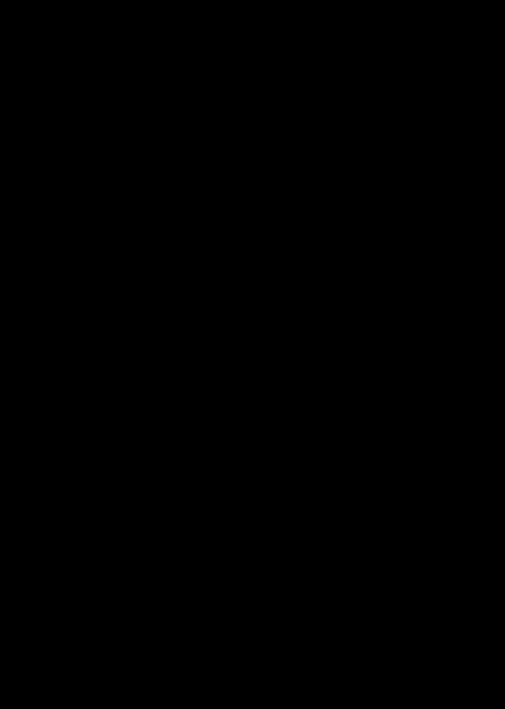
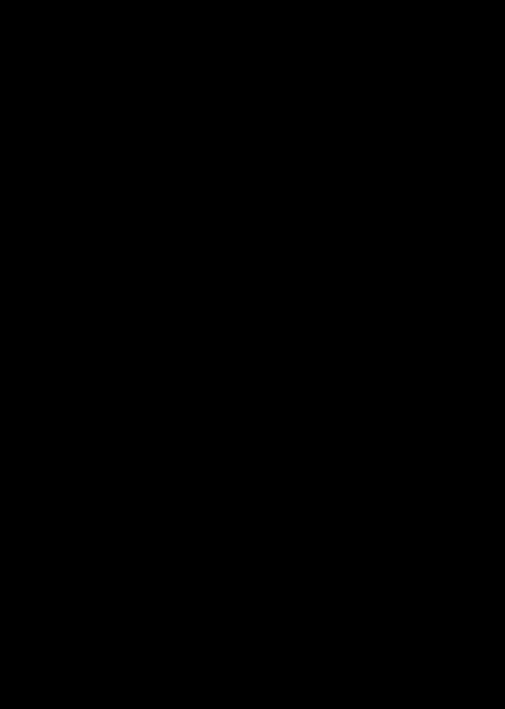
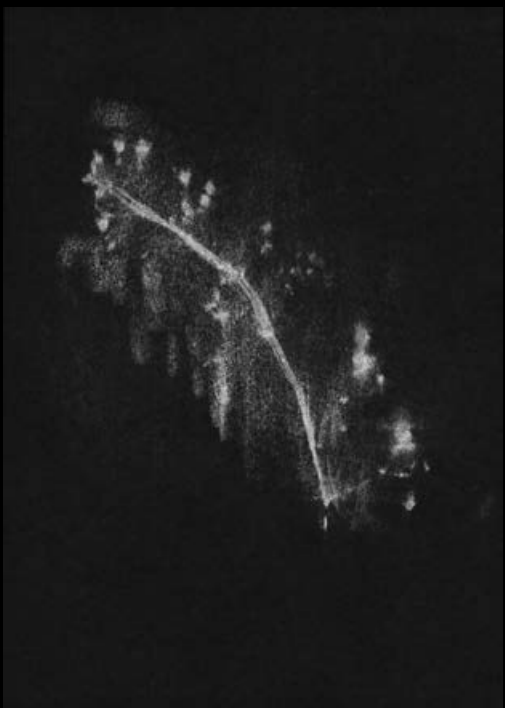
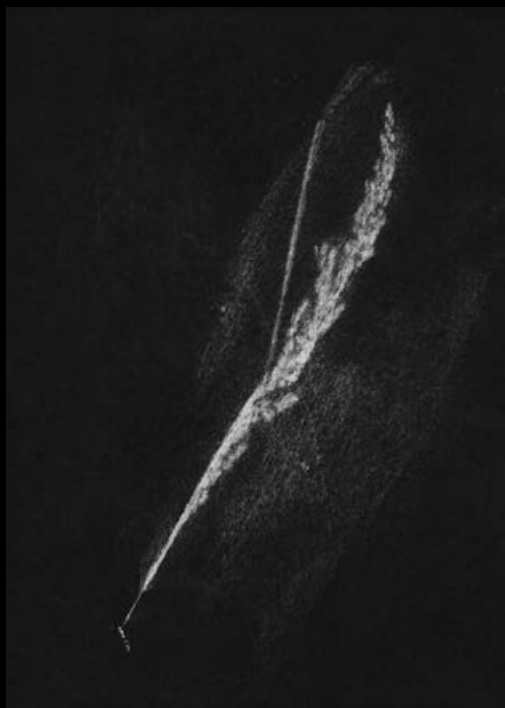


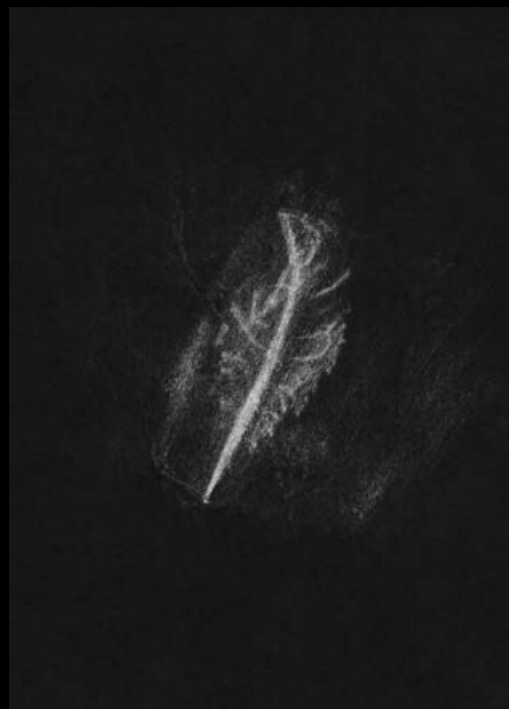
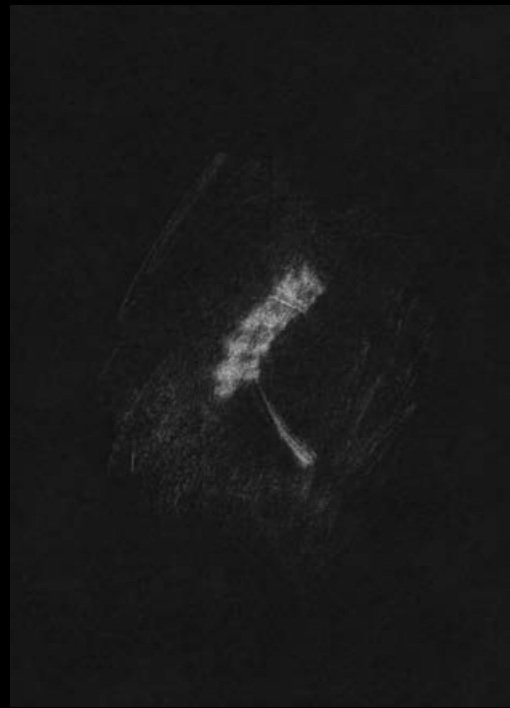
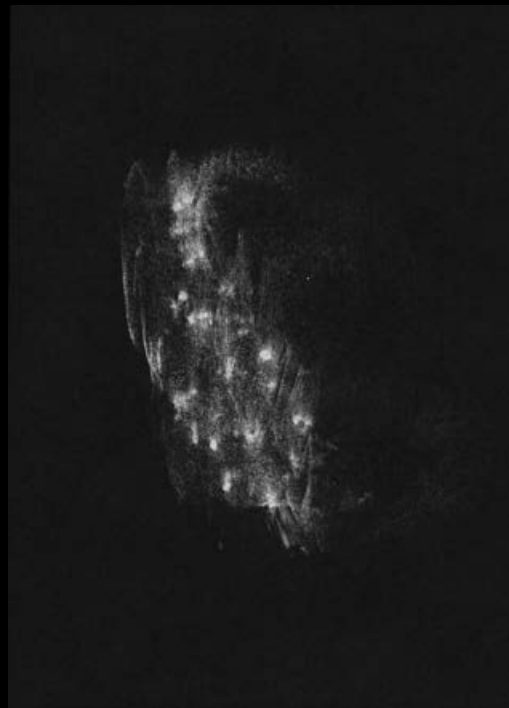
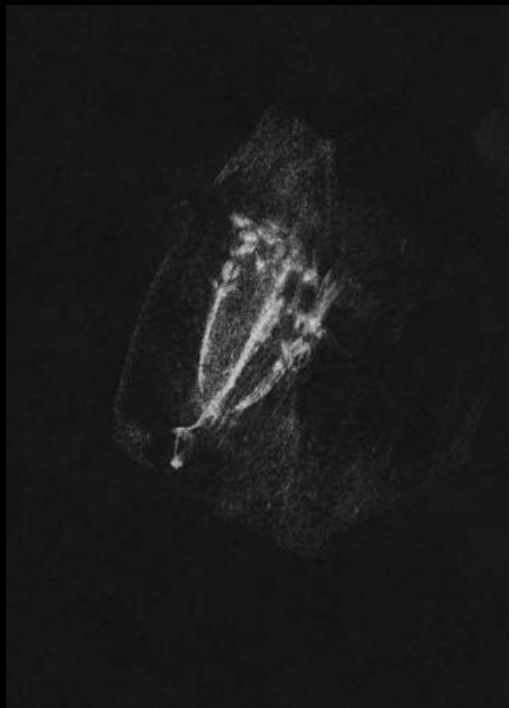
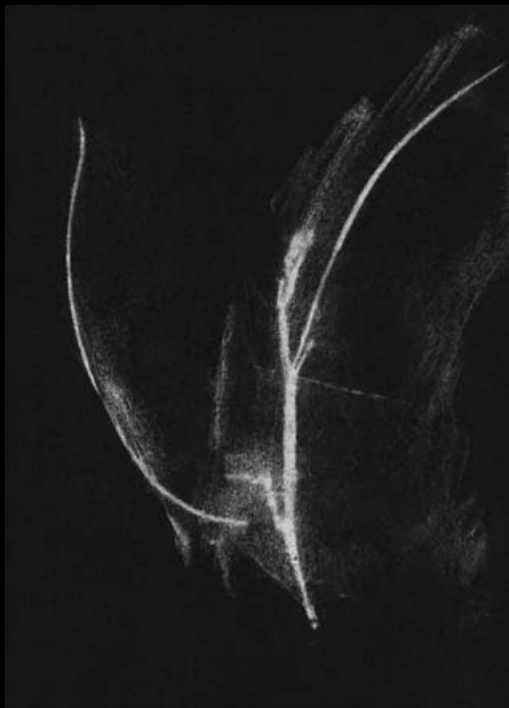






250 m s.l.m. Plantarium









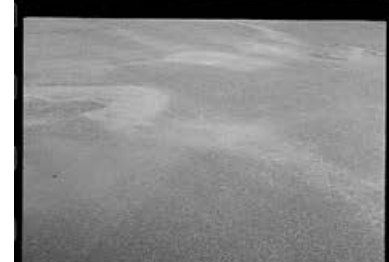
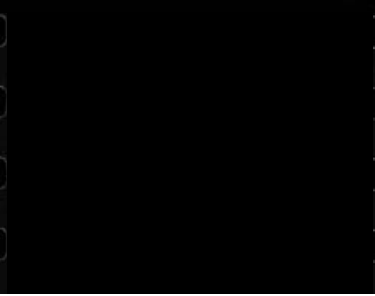






450 m a.s.l.









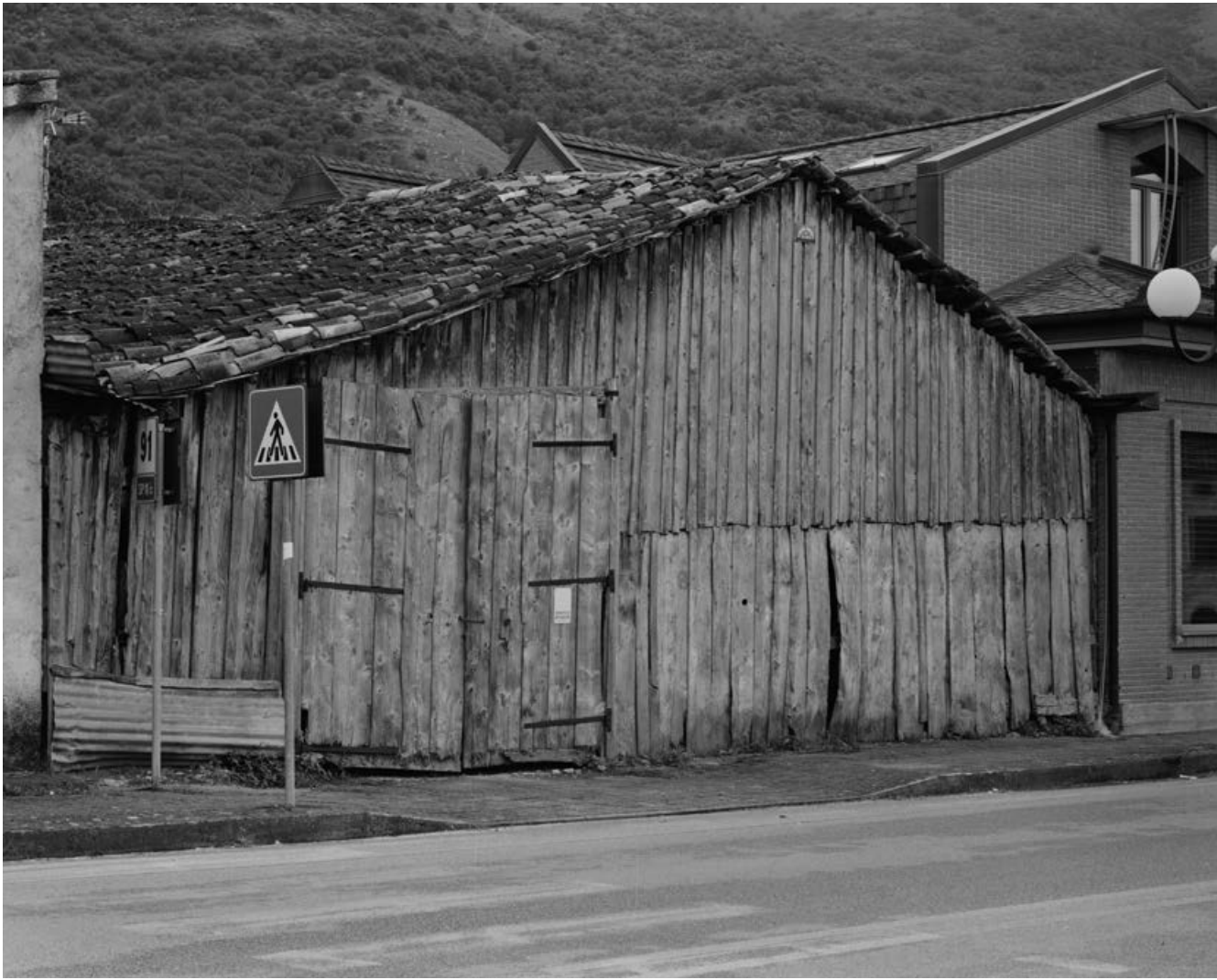




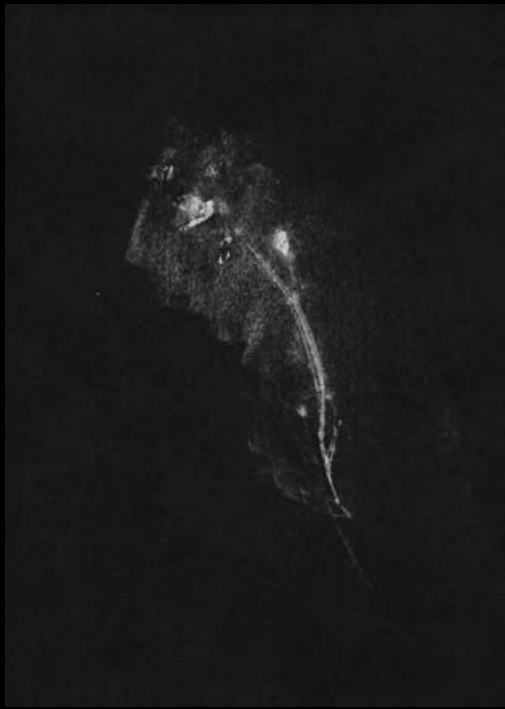


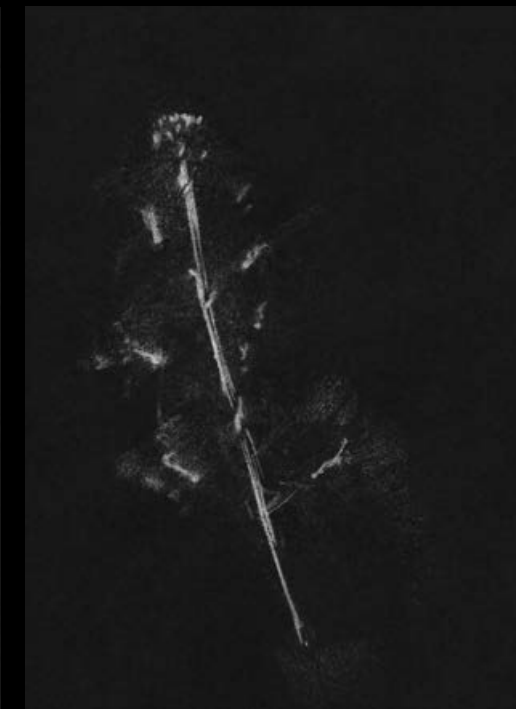
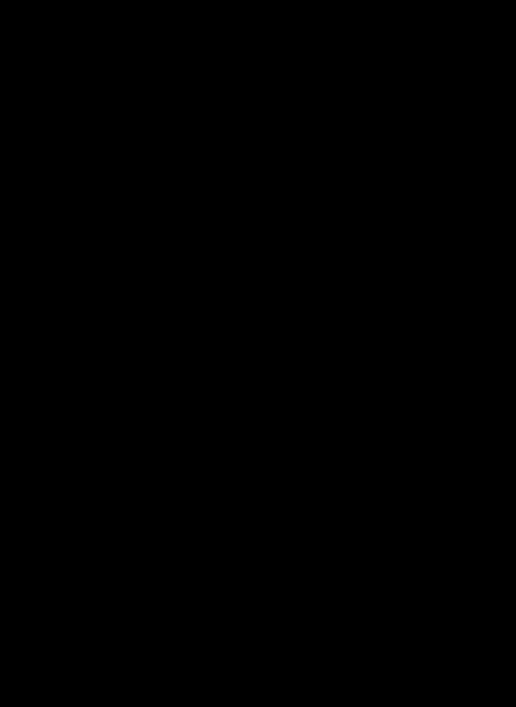
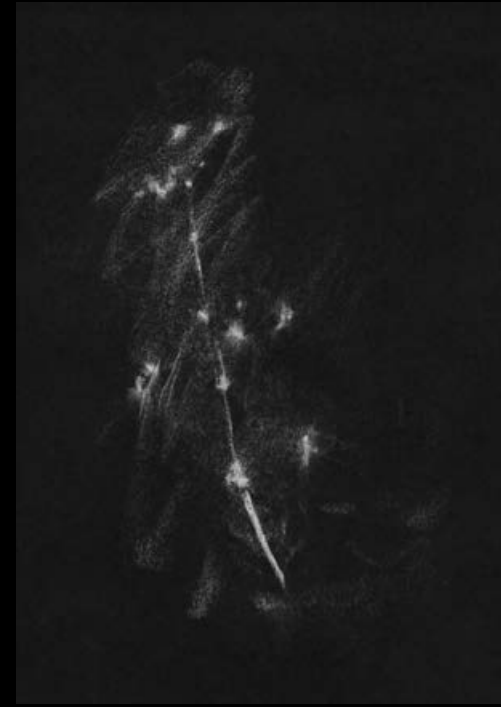
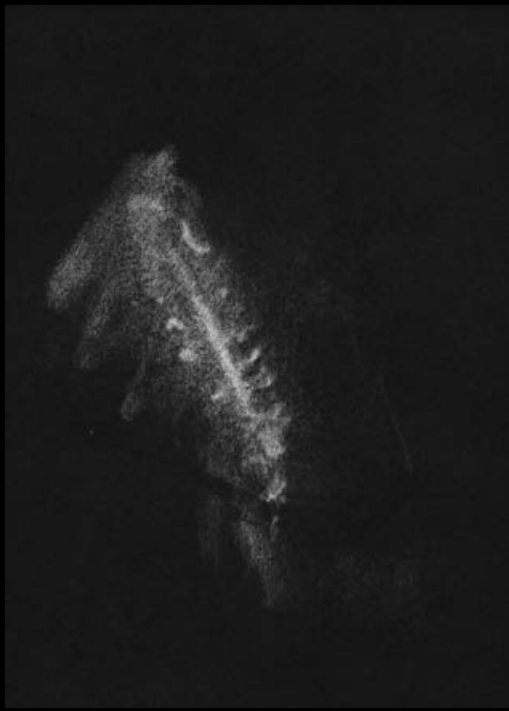






450 m s.l.m. Plantarium























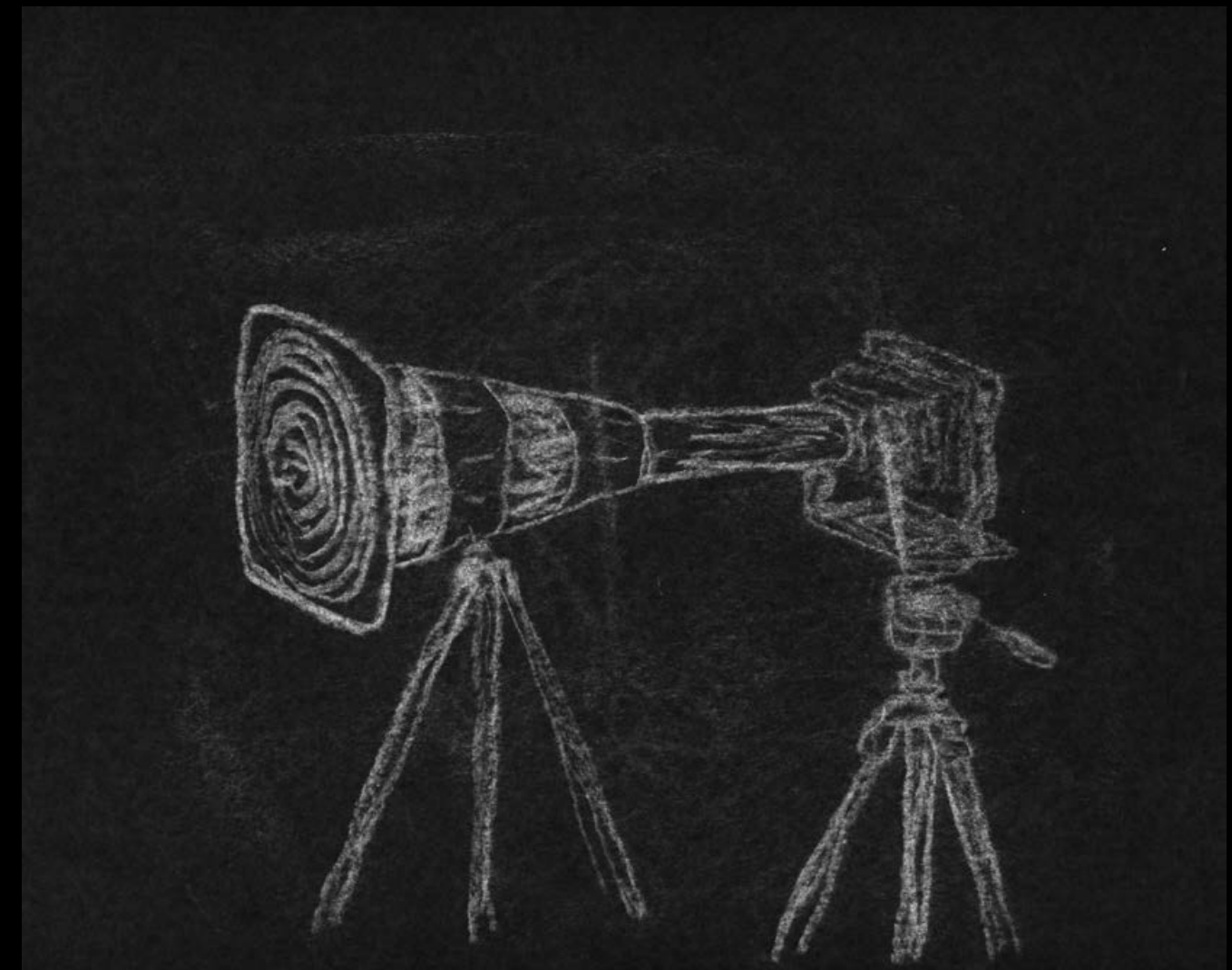


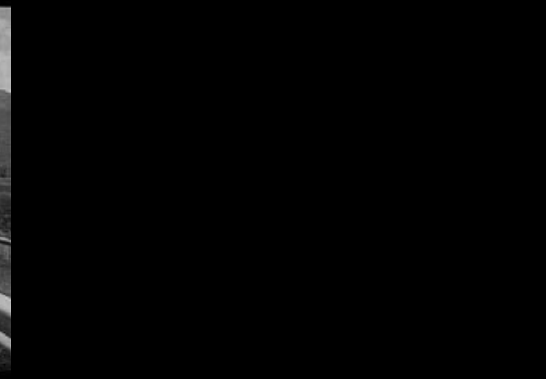
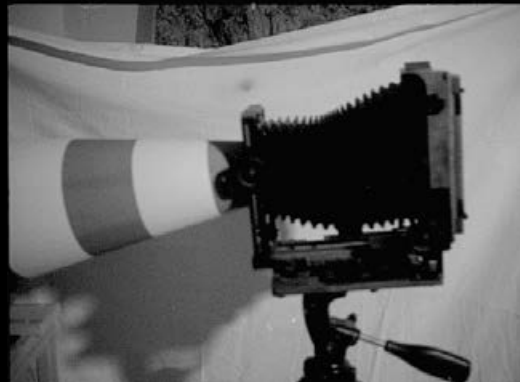
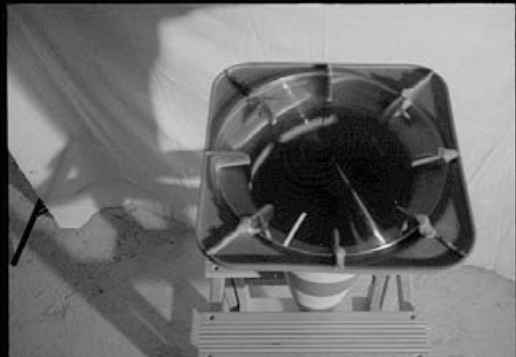
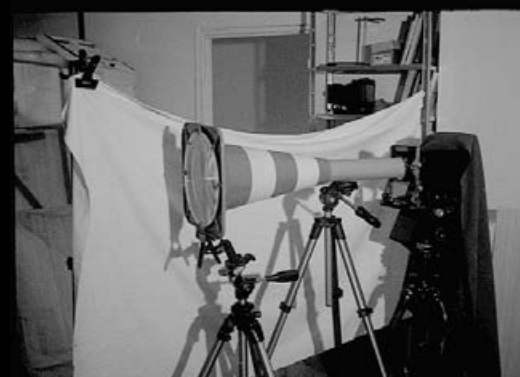
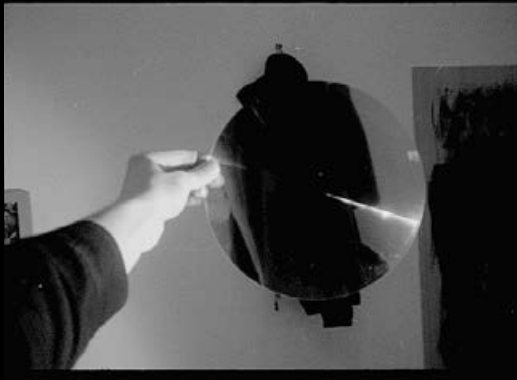
On Failing to Photograph Birds

















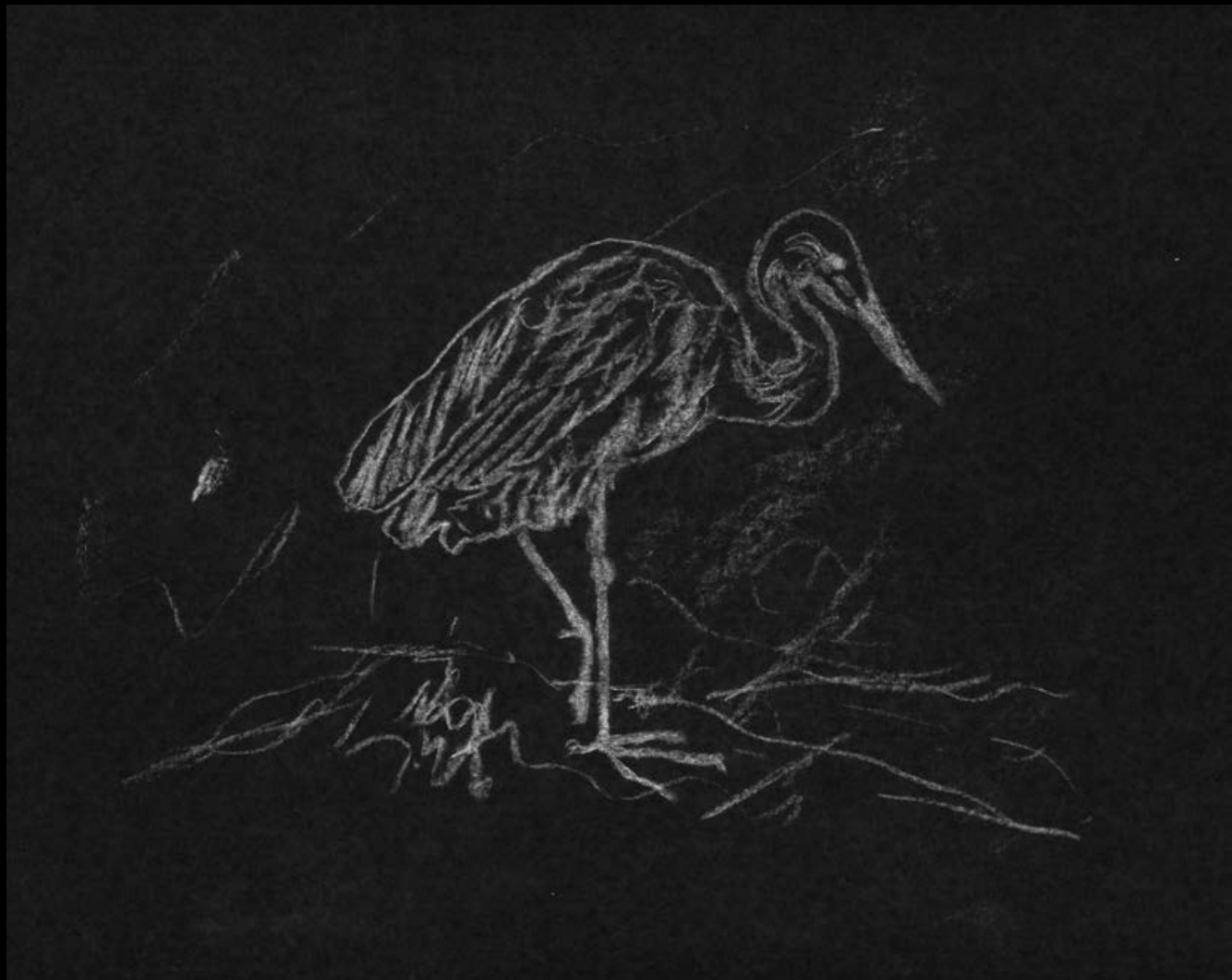




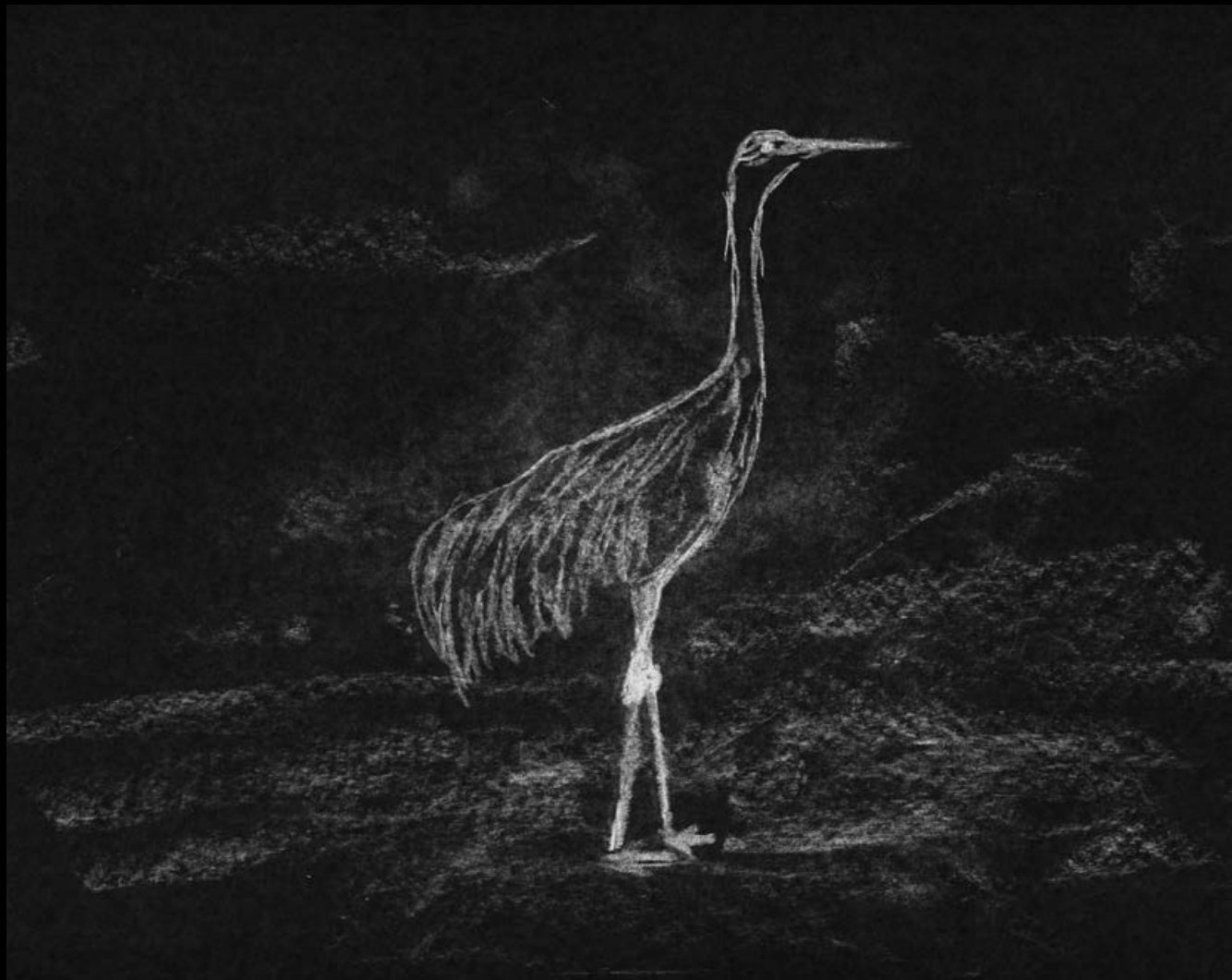


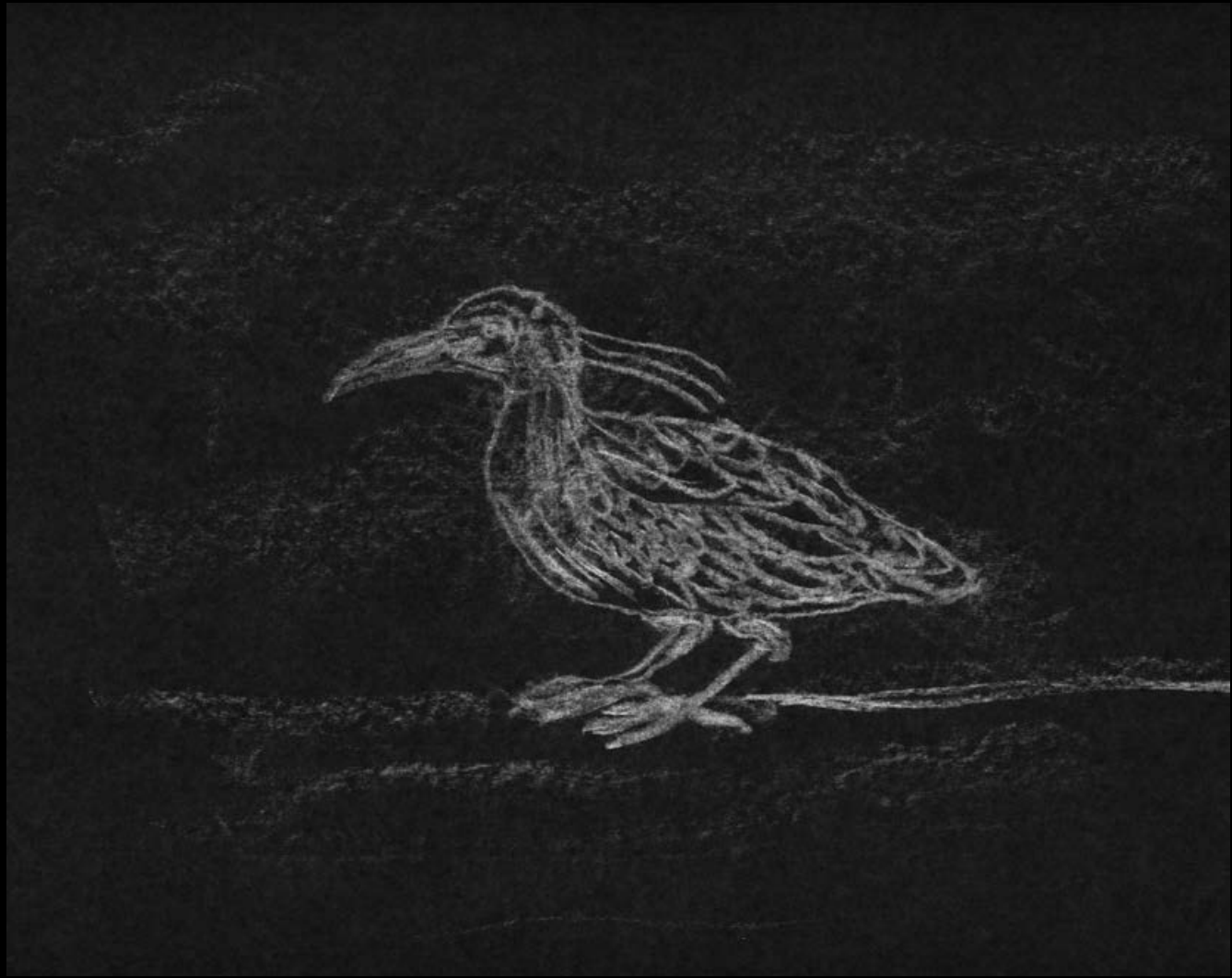


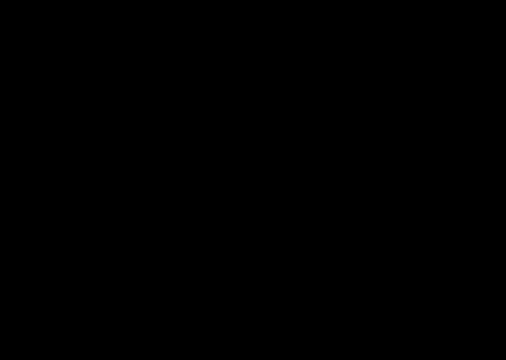








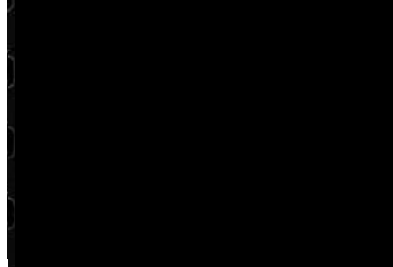






650 m a.s.l.









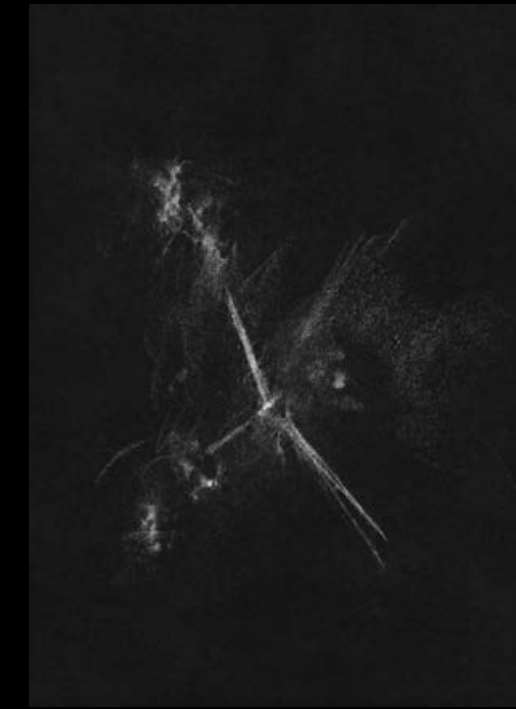
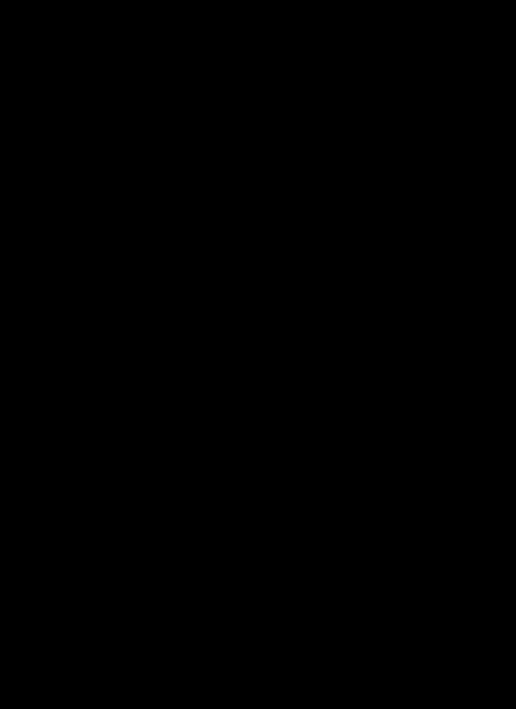
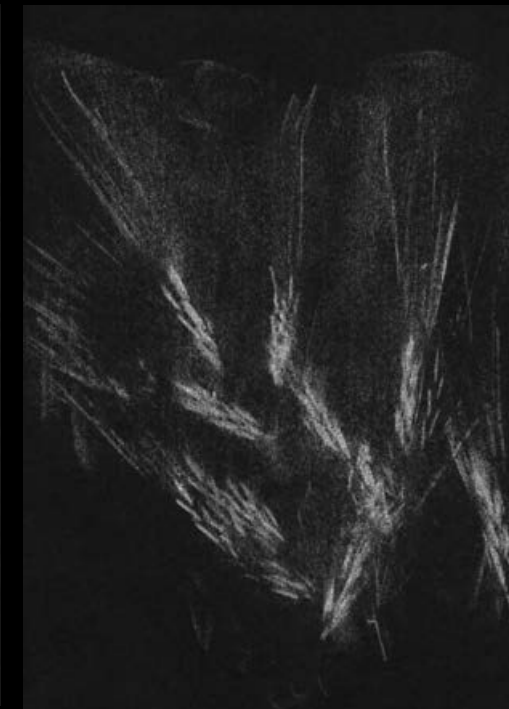






620 m s.l.m. Plantarium















1100 m a.s.l.





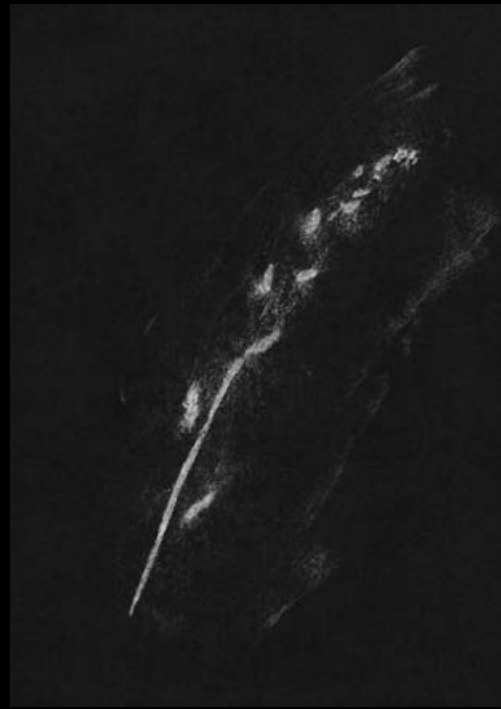
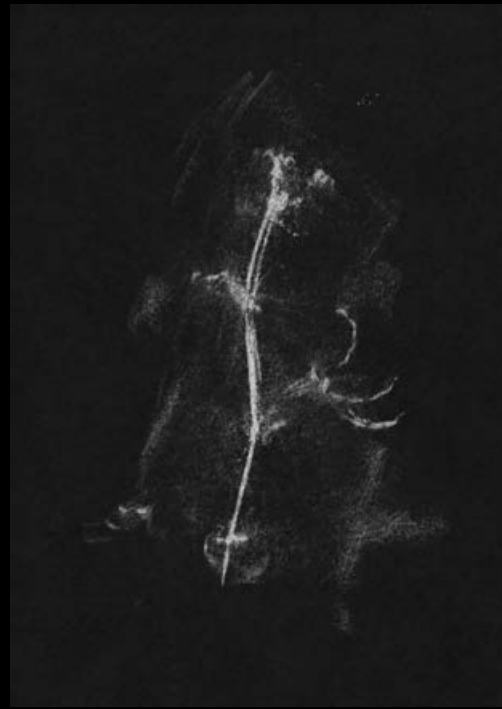
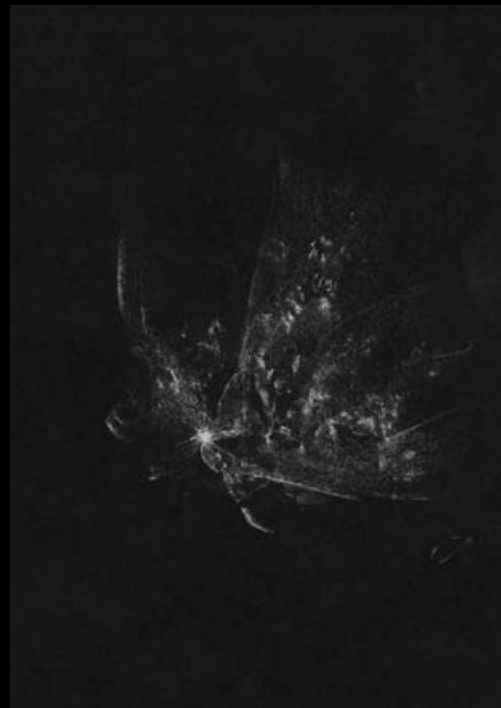
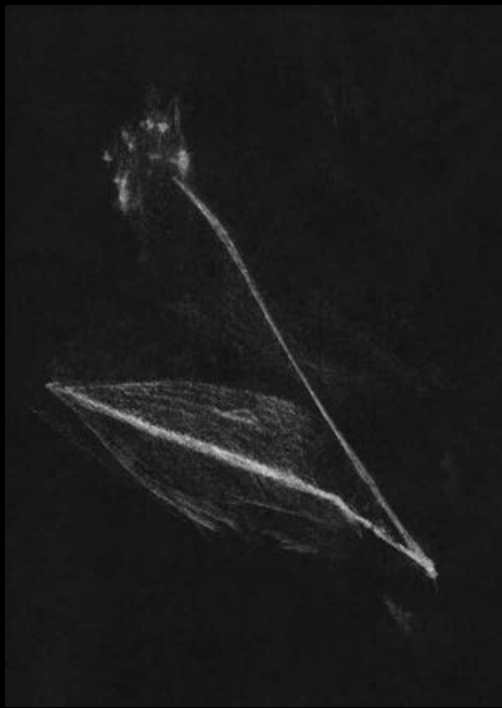


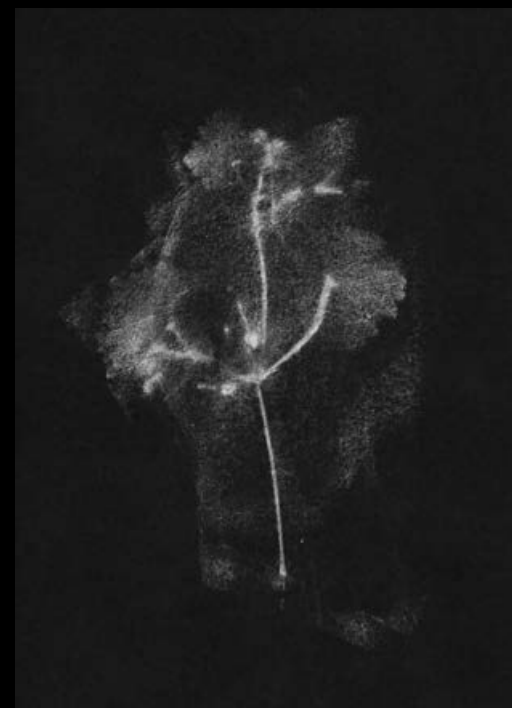
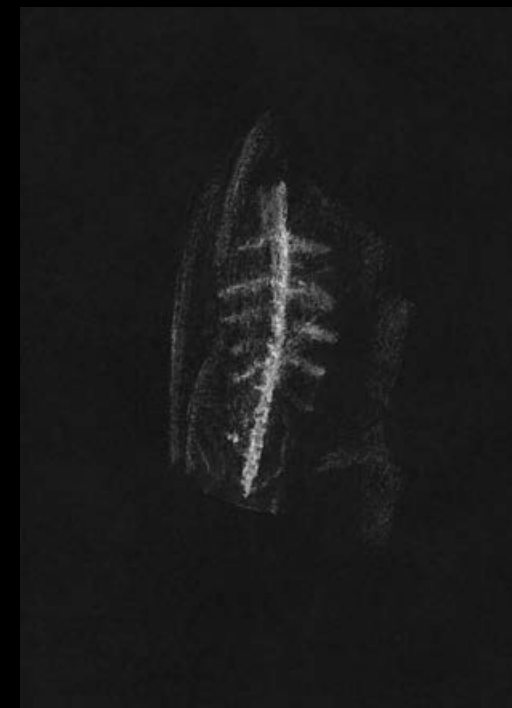
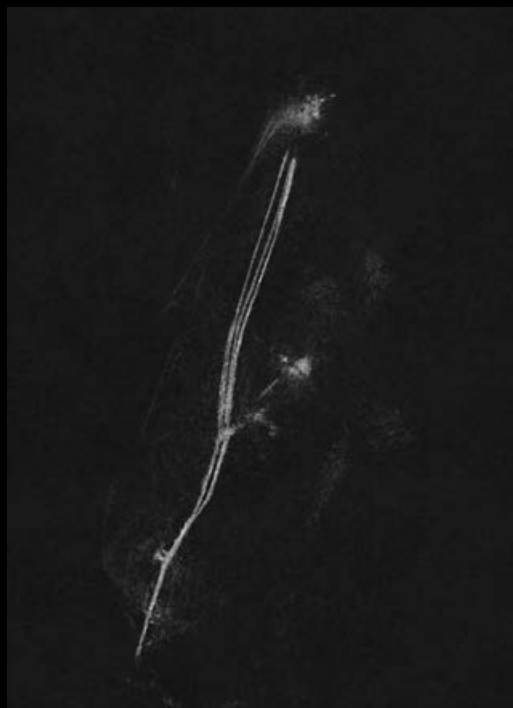






















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Graduating from FSM in Florence with a degree in photography in 2007. He started his photographic research in 2005 with a project about coastal erosion, which affects 1500 km of Italian costline. The resulting project, “Among” aimed to investigate natural processes of the landscape. Over the last few years Barile’s work has been driven by an interest in science in relation to art - both conceived as tools for a better understanding of reality. His long-term project, “An Investigation of the Laws Observable in the Composition, Dissolution and Restoration of Land,” examines the manner in which geomorphology acts upon the land, serving as testimony to the vastness of geological time. The work employs photography to stimulate a deeper understanding of the landscape and our connection with the natural environment.

“At first glance, Fabio Barile’s practice could be said to follow in the long tradition of Italian landscape photography which includes practitioners such as Luigi Ghirri, Guido Guidi. On closer inspection, however, the images in An Investigation hew to a tight conceptual framework that belie their simplicity, asking deeper questions about the nature of Time, and geologic time questions whose philosophical implications underpin scientific endeavor, human perception, and the unknowable forces of creative destruction at work in Nature”I. I.Naomi Itami

Selected exhibitions

- 2025

On the Edge of the eyelid,
Nivola Museum, Orani (Nu), Italy
- 2024

The Secret of the Deep Time,
Verwey Museum, Haarlem, The Netherlands
Works for a Cosmic Feeling,
Witty Books, Turin
- 2023

Tre-di-ci ,Sguardi sui musei di Lombardia (Group exhibition)
Palazzo Reale, Milano, Italy
- 2022

Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella — Le Forme del Tempo
Terme di Diocleziano, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome, Italy
Regeneration (Group exhibition)
American Academy in Rome, Italy
Di Roccia, fuochi e avventure sotterranee (Group exhibition)
MAXXI, L'Aquila, Italy
- 2021

Di Roccia, fuochi e avventure sotterranee (Group exhibition)
MAXXI, Rome, Italy
Works for a Cosmic Feeling

- Matèria, Rome, Italy

2020

Group exhibition, On Earth - Imaging, technology and the natural world
FOAM Museum, Amsterdam.
- 2019

Group exhibition, On Earth - Imaging, technology and the natural world
50th edition of the Rencontres d'Arles, in collaboration with FOAM Museum.
Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella - The shape of time
Centro Arti visive Pescheria, Pesaro, Italy
- 2018

Osservare la terra — a dialogue between contemporary photography and the historical archive of ICCD about photography as a tool for observation
ICCD — Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome, curated by Benedetta Cestelli Guidi
- 2017

An Investigation of the laws observable in the composition, dissolution and restoration of land,
Matèria, Rome
- 2015

Homage to James Hutton
Matèria, Rome, Italy

Publications

- Works for a Cosmic Feeling — Witty Books 2024
- Di roccia fuochi e avventure sotterranee — Quodlibet/Ghella, 2020
- Fabio Barile & Domingo Milella, The shape of time — Fondazione malaspina edition, 2019
- Fabio Barile & Francesco Neri, Middle-Earth a journey inside Elica — Fondazione malaspina edition, 2014
- Vision And Documents Box, — Documentary Platform, 2010
- Diary N° o - Things that do not happen — 3/3, 2009